

## **All-State: Merle J. Isaac (1898-1996): His Contributions and Influence on Music Published for the School Orchestra**

presented by Dr. Sam Tsugawa — reported by Cassandra Herold

This session presented an interesting history of Merle Isaac as a change agent in how we teach orchestra in the current day. It was really interesting to see how he began his career and developed a passion for orchestra in the schools. He believed that we should have orchestras in the schools, and he believed that we could (and should) be able to teach technical and musical skills within the orchestra setting. He was a positive and calm force in creating change in how we deliver orchestra programs. He also believed that it was necessary to change how the music was composed in order to really reach the violists and bassists; (a sample of music that had been used during his area was shown on a slide—whoa, viola part!). He worked on both composing his own music for teaching, and

also creating effective arrangements for use within his classroom. Teachers still use many of his arrangements in our current day for their classrooms. I really enjoyed this presentation, and learned so much about how school pedagogy really began to develop during his time. His influence continued even after he left his teaching post—he continued to compose and arrange, and was a key influencer in the Mid-West clinic, right up until his death.

*Dr. Sam Tsugawa is Associate Professor of Music Education at Brigham Young University, and was our featured presenter at the 2018 All-State Workshop. Cassandra Herold teaches in the Stillwater Area Public Schools and serves MNSOTA as President-Elect. ‡*